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DEPT FOR CA/OCS/ACS Kim Richter

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL REPORTS FIRST H1N1 DEATH, ORDERS INOCULATION OF
EVERY CITIZEN

¶11. SUMMARY. Israel's Ministry of Health announced the country's first H1N1-related fatality on Monday, July 27. To date, 1,500 cases of H1N1 have been reported, with 30 to 40 new cases each day. For the first time in Israel's history, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has issued an order for the purchase of enough swine flu vaccines to inoculate every Israeli citizen. In addition, the Ministry of Health has agreed to increase the nation's flu medication reserves by five percent, so that the amount will be sufficient to treat 35 percent of the population rather than just a quarter. According to the Health Ministry, the vaccine is not expected to arrive before October and may arrive by the end of next winter. Israel's Director of Public Health Services has stated that 99.9 percent of those infected with the virus have not had serious complications. END SUMMARY

¶12. The Ministry of Health announced on Monday, July 27, the death of a 35-year-old Israeli man infected with the H1N1 virus. The man, whom the Ministry describes as "overweight and a heavy smoker," died on Sunday at Josephthal Hospital in Eilat. The Ministry states that the man's underlying health issues contributed to his death, but his family has filed a malpractice suit, claiming that his case was "not treated seriously enough" at the hospital.

¶13. Sunday's death is the first reported H1N1 death in Israel. Meanwhile, a 38-year-old pregnant woman from East Jerusalem is in serious condition on a respirator after being hospitalized with swine flu, and a 50-year-old from the Jerusalem area who has hypertension and diabetes is also on a respirator after developing complications from the H1N1 virus. They and a handful of other swine flu virus patients are in medium or serious condition in various parts of the country.

¶14. The Director of Public Health Services at Israel's Ministry of Health, Itamar Grotto, states that about 1,500 cases - about 30 or 40 new cases a day - have been reported to date in Israel. Many more may have gone unreported, with people feeling unwell deciding to stay home and not see a doctor.

¶15. On July 29, for the first time in Israel's history, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued an order for the purchase of enough swine flu vaccines to inoculate every Israeli citizen. In addition, the Ministry of Health agreed to increase the nation's flu medication reserves by five percent, so that the amount will be sufficient to treat 35 percent of the population rather than just a quarter. Per the Health Ministry, the vaccine is not expected to arrive before October and may arrive by the end of next winter. The cost of the vaccine purchase together with the increase in medication supplies will be around 450 million New Israeli Shekels [approx. 116.5 million USD].

¶16. Israel's Ministry of Health is running an H1N1 phone information line with answers to questions on Wednesday and Thursday between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. The Ministry is also planning a public education campaign for the autumn to reduce prevalence of the flu and to encourage vaccination against conventional influenza, which could combine with the H1N1 virus.

¶17. Ordinary influenza is prevalent in the fall and winter months, thriving in cold weather when windows are closed and fresh air is not introduced. But Grotto said that H1N1 seemed to be thriving in Israel's hot summer weather because "it is very infectious. Fortunately, however, the effects have been very mild, with over 99.9 percent of those infected not having serious complications."

Also, reports in the Hebrew media that up to one-quarter of Israelis are likely to contract the H1N1 virus this winter were described by Grotto as exaggerated.

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